

THE HON. J. JUDD BUCHANAN, MINISTER OF INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS, HAS REQUESTED THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT DELIVERED BY HIM ON BEHALF OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IN RESPONSE TO THE DENE DECLARATION, BE SENT TO ALL MUNICIPALITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES AND SETTLEMENT AND COMMUNITY COUNCILS.

THE STATEMENT WAS READ BY THE MINISTER IN YELLOWKNIFE THIS MORNING, SEPTEMBER 10, 1975.

VARIOUS STATEMENTS AND POSITIONS TAKEN BY THE NATIVE LEADERS OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES HAVE CAUSED ME INCREASED CONCERN OVER THE PAST MONTHS. MY CONCERN HAS RISEN FURTHER SINCE THE CIRCULATION OF THE DENE MANIFESTO AND THE PUBLICATION OF THE DENE DECLARATION AT THE FORT SIMPSON CONFERENCE OF THE INDIAN BROTHERHOOD OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES. SO AS NOT TO CONFUSE THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH - AND OF CANADA - THAT MY SILENCE TO DATE HAS MEANT AGREEMENT, I WISH TO RESPOND PUBLICLY. I AM PARTICULARLY CONCERNED THAT THE JUST RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING LAND CLAIMS MAY BE HAMPERED BY STATEMENTS WHICH CAN BE MISUNDERSTOOD. I AM ALSO CONCERNED THAT UNREASONABLE DEMANDS WHICH CANNOT BE MET WILL CONTINUE A FEELING OF DISSATISFACTION ON THE PART OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE.

WHEN I RECEIVED A COPY OF THE DECLARATION I REQUESTED A MEETING WITH THE IBNWT AND THE METIS ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES FOR SEPTEMBER 1ST. I WISHED TO MEET DIRECTLY WITH THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH TO DISCUSS CERTAIN STATEMENTS WHICH CAUSED ME CONCERN AS MINISTER OF INDIAN AND NORTHERN AFFAIRS AND AS A MEMBER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA

I WANTED TO HEAR THEIR EXPLANATION OF THIS DECLARATION. AT THAT SAME MEETING I ISSUED AN INVITATION TO THE CHIEFS AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE IBNWT AND THE MANWT TO MEET ON MY RETURN TO HEAR MY THOUGHTS ON THE DECLARATION AND OTHER ITEMS OF MUTUAL CONCERN. THIS MEETING WAS DECLINED. I AM HERE TODAY TO DELIVER A STATEMENT TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH. I HOPE YOU WILL TRANSMIT IT IN ITS ENTIRETY.

Boreal Institute Library

THE DENE DECLARATION CONTAINS CERTAIN STATEMENT WHICH I AS A MINISTER OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CANNOT ACCEPT. IT STATES:

'WHAT WE THE DENE ARE STRUGGLING FOR IS THE RECOGNITION OF THE DENE NATION BY THE GOVERNMENTS AND PEOPLES OF THE WORLD.'

I REJECT THIS STATEMENT. THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH ARE CITIZENS OF CANADA. THEY ARE AND WILL BE REPRESENTED IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY BY THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT.

IT STATES ALSO:

'BUT THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DENE. THE GOVERNMENT OF THE NWT IS NOT THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DENE.'

THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE NWT HAVE SHOWN THAT THEY CAN BE AND ARE ACTIVE PARTICIPANTS IN BOTH LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT. THESE ARE THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE OF THE NWT AND OF ALL THE RESIDENTS OF THE NWT.

IT FURTHER STATES:

'OUR PLEA TO THE WORLD IS TO HELP US IN OUR STRUGGLE TO FIND A PLACE IN THE WORLD COMMUNITY WHERE WE CAN EXERCISE OUR RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION AS A DISTINCT PEOPLE AND AS A NATION.'

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA CANNOT ACCEPT SUCH A PLEA - EVEN IN A BURST OF RHETORICAL EXTRAVAGANCE.

I HAVE LOOKED AT THE DECLARATION AS A WHOLE AND THE PREVIOUS STATEMENTS OF INDIAN AND METIS LEADERS THAT THEY CLAIM FULL TITLE INCLUDING RESOURCES TO 450,000 SQUARE MILES OF THE NWT. THIS IS ALL OF THE LAND IN WHICH THE 15,000 INDIAN AND METIS PEOPLE HAVE BEEN INHABITANTS. THIS LEADS ME TO BELIEVE THAT THEY SEE THE LAND CLAIM AS RESULTING IN TOTAL ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL CONTROL OVER THE NORTH.

Rec'd:
Order No.
Price:
Acc. No.

Gift
Arctic Summer School

26516



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2022 with funding from
University of Alberta Libraries

<https://archive.org/details/statementinrespo00buch>

I HOPE THAT THE DENE DECLARATION DOES NOT MEAN THESE THINGS. I HOPE THAT IT IS THE EXPRESSION OF LEGITIMATE CONCERNS REGARDING THE LAND CLAIM, OF LEGITIMATE CONCERNS OF THE PACE AND NATURE OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, OF A DESIRE FOR A SUBSTANTIAL SHARE IN THE ECONOMY OF THE NORTH AND OF A DESIRE TO SEE THE EXISTING POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS SERVE THEM BETTER.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVE OF THE GOVERNMENT AS REFLECTED IN THE AUGUST 8TH, 1973 STATEMENT WAS, AND STILL IS, TO SETTLE THE LONGSTANDING GRIEVANCE THAT SOME NATIVE GROUPS HAVE NOT BEEN COMPENSATED FOR THE LOSS OF INTEREST IN LANDS THEY TRADITIONALLY OCCUPIED AND USED. IT IS THE GOVERNMENT'S VIEW THAT IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES INDIAN TITLE HAS BEEN EXTINGUISHED BUT THAT THERE HAS NEVER BEEN ADEQUATE COMPENSATION FOR ITS LOSS. THE GOVERNMENT DEMONSTRATED ITS WILLINGNESS TO GIVE NATIVE GROUPS NOT ONLY THE TIME BUT THE MONEY FOR MAKING PREPARATIONS AND DOCUMENTATION FOR CLAIMS OF COMPENSATION. SINCE 1972 SUBSTANTIAL FUNDS HAVE BEEN PROVIDED TO NATIVE CLAIMANTS IN THE MACKENZIE DISTRICT SO THAT THE NECESSARY RESEARCH COULD BE UNDERTAKEN AND A STRONG CASE ASSEMBLED.

I ATTACH GREAT IMPORTANCE TO SETTLING THE LAND CLAIMS AND WILL DO ALL POSSIBLE TO MOVE QUICKLY TO DEAL WITH THE DOCUMENTED CLAIMS OF THE NATIVE PEOPLES AS SOON AS THEY ARE PRESENTED TO ME.

A JUST LAND SETTLEMENT CAN ASSIST NATIVE PEOPLE TO OVERCOME PAST DISADVANTAGES AND LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR A FUTURE IN WHICH THEY HAVE ECONOMIC SELF-RELIANCE, PRIDE AND SELF-RESPECT AND A SOLID STAKE IN THE FUTURE. A SETTLEMENT IS BEING FINALIZED IN JAMES BAY, THERE HAS BEEN GOOD PROSPECT OF PROGRESS IN B.C. IN DEALING WITH CUT-OFF LANDS. IN THE YUKON I MET LAST SATURDAY WITH THE CYI AND WE ADOPTED THE OBJECTIVE OF MARCH 31ST, 1976 FOR AN AGREEMENT IN PRINCIPLE.

PROGRESS CAN AND IS BEING MADE IN SETTLING LAND CLAIMS WHEN BOTH SIDES CO-OPERATE IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF TRUST AND MUTUAL RESPECT.

THE PROBLEM OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESOURCES OF THE NORTH IS A DIFFICULT ONE. IT WAS THIS GOVERNMENT WHICH ASKED MR. JUSTICE BERGER TO ENQUIRE INTO THE SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF THE PROPOSED MACKENZIE VALLEY PIPELINE AND MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS ON THOSE AREAS SO THAT, IF AND WHEN CONSTRUCTED, IT WILL NOT HAVE UNACCEPTABLE CONSEQUENCES FOR COMMUNITIES AND THE ENVIRONMENT CONCERNED.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA FURTHER IS PLANNING MORE VIGOROUS ACTION AND STRINGENT REGULATION OF RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT WITH PARTICULAR ATTENTION TO THE BENEFITS WHICH MUST ACCRUE TO THE NATIVES OF THE NORTH. AS MR. WAH-SHEE STATED BEFORE THE BERGER INQUIRY, 'THE NATIVE PEOPLE ARE SAYING 'WE MUST HAVE A LARGE DEGREE OF CONTROL OVER OUR OWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT'.'

I STRONGLY AGREE. NATIVE NORTHERNERS MUST BE INVOLVED IN DECISIONS REGARDING DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTH. IT IS ALSO ESSENTIAL THAT SUBSTANTIAL BENEFIT ACCRUE TO THEM.

THE NATIVE PEOPLE DESIRE THAT WE CHANGE OUR POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS TO MEET THEIR NEEDS. THIS IS ALWAYS A LEGITIMATE GOAL IN A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY. PARLIAMENT RECENTLY ENACTED CHANGES TO THE YUKON AND NWT ACTS TO REMOVE ALL APPOINTED COUNCILLORS, TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF ELECTED COUNCILLORS, AND TO PUT ELECTED COUNCILLORS IN POSITIONS OF IMPORTANT EXECUTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. 9 OF 15 COUNCILLORS IN THE NWT ARE OF NATIVE ORIGIN. SINCE 1972 SUBSTANTIAL FUNDING HAS BEEN PROVIDED TO THE NATIVE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE NORTH TO ASSIST THEM IN STRENGTHENING NATIVE LEADERSHIP. TERRITORIAL AND FEDERAL PROGRAMMES IN THE AREAS OF EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, HEALTH, SOCIAL WELFARE AND COMMUNITY SERVICES HAVE GIVEN THEM A GREATER CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH AND PARTICIPATE IN THEIR GOVERNMENTS. THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA IS PREPARED TO DEAL RESPONSIVELY WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR ALTERATIONS TO ITS POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA WILL NOT ACCEPT A DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE FROM ANY GROUP WITHIN ITS BORDERS. IT HAS AND WILL CONTINUE TO FOSTER THE GREATEST POSSIBLE DIVERSITY OF ITS CULTURAL GROUPS. CANADA IS A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY AND THE CANADIAN GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WISH TO SEE ANY PARTICULAR GROUP, ESPECIALLY ITS ABORIGINAL PEOPLE, LOSE THEIR PARTICULAR CULTURE AND WAY OF LIFE. HOWEVER, ALL CULTURAL GROUPS MUST BE WILLING TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CANADIAN SOCIETY AND SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT AND TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR MAKING THAT GOVERNMENT, THROUGH CO-OPERATION, SERVE THEIR NEEDS.

I HOPE THAT THIS SHORT STATEMENT HAS SERVED TO CLARIFY TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH, BUT PARTICULARLY THE NATIVE NORTHERNERS, THE POSITION OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CANADA. WE ARE PREPARED TO BE FLEXIBLE IN SEEKING SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE POLITICAL, SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL EVOLUTION OF THE NORTH. IT WILL TAKE THE CO-OPERATION AND MUTUAL RESPECT OF ALL.

